

NSC BRIEFING

3 June 1954

## INDOCHINA MILITARY SITUATION

- I. Rapid redeployment of Viet Minh battle corps poses imminent threat to Tonkin delta.
  - A. Five Divisions from Dien Bien Phu expected to be in position around delta this week.
  - B. With short period of rest and resupply, could be ready for action by 15 June.
- II. Following indications of possible enemy intent to attack delta noted:
  - A. Rapidity of divisions' return from Dien Bien Phu, although logical from worsening weather standpoint, could indicate plan for early offensive.
  - B. Training of 17 battalions at Thai Nguyen believed by French for purpose of filling out depleted battle corps.

DIA review(s) completed.

III. Cegny [redacted] looks for major  
attack 15-20 June, says it's "almost certain."

- A. He is pessimistic about holding Hanoi; fears enemy will concentrate on Hanoi-Haiphong rail-road lines and he won't be able to prevent permanent break.
- B. If such break occurs, he does not "intend to have another Dien Bien Phu" and will withdraw to Haiphong bridgehead.
  - 1. Hanoi dependent on daily coal supplies to maintain electric light plant and all-important water purification system; already reported low in rice supplies due present Viet Minh harassment cities' communications.

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IV. General impression [redacted] from military and civilian leaders is that delta, except for Haiphong bridgehead, can't last 30 days under major enemy attack.

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V. [redacted] full attack on delta would bring no disintegration of French regular forces, even though their morale is poor.

A. However, Vietnamese troops would not be dependable.

VI. [redacted] we may see piecemeal employment of enemy battle corps in delta, rather than full-scale attack.

A. Thus, enemy could avoid head-on collision with heavier armed French forces and exposure to air attack on their concentrations.

VII. In face of critical situation, French are planning build-up, reorganization of delta defenses; say will try to hold all of the delta.

A. Most important plan is increase in mobile battalions from present 21-25 to 30-33.

B. 10-12 battalions will come from Laos and others from Africa.

C. Abandonment of some small, static posts will release additional troops for the mobile forces.

D. [redacted] total infantry strength after build-up and reorganization will be 117 battalions, up from present 101.

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E. French also plan to concentrate mobile strength in north of delta, leaving southern areas to Vietnamese forces.

I. Initially, though, mobile units will support Vietnamese in south.

VIII. Laos, to be stripped of 10 to 13 battalions for reinforcing delta, faces possible rapid deterioration of security situation.

A. Viet Minh regular strength in Laos, although only 10 battalions, expected to take advantage of French exodus and increase harassment of local forces.

B. Viet Minh regulars will be abetted by some 8,000 irregulars.

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X. On the political side, disintegration in Vietnam being met ineffectually with old formulas.

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A. Bao Dai considering Premier Bao Loc's replacement with Ngo Dinh Diem.

1. Diem described as "honest mystic," has few qualifications other than influence among fellow Roman Catholics.
2. Mere prospect of his becoming premier said to have reduced him to incoherent state.
3. Long-standing enmity between Bao Dai and Diem suggests latter may be cast in role of scapegoat.
4. Diem's appointment might cost Vietnam some of its ablest men who find him distasteful, including Governor Tri of North Vietnam.
  - (a) But he has avowed to fire "that imitation Frenchman" and would-be dictator, chief of staff Binh.

B. Dejean's own solution to current crisis is Bao Dai as own premier, with three vice premiers.

1. However, Dejean specifically named three of most unpopular men in Vietnam for these posts.

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XII. Vietnamese foreign policy theme of American support shoves spotlight with insistence on French approval of much-delayed independence treaty.

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A. [redacted] negotiation

of supplementary economic and military conventions, which French want signed before treaty, has now been virtually suspended pending Geneva outcome.

B. Treaty delay not only precludes whatever morale value might lie in its signing, but also immobilizes in Paris many high officials of Vietnam government.

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